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ABSTRACT

The disciplinary background and length of service in the deanship of 1,496 deans were examined. The study was limited to 240 doctoral degree granting institutions and covered the period from 1872 through 1975. Institutions awarding exclusively professional and theological degrees were not included. Wide diversity was found, although the most prominent academic discipline from which graduate deans have been chosen during the past century has been Chemistry, followed by Education, English, History, Physics, Biology, Engineering, Economics, Psychology, and Mathematics. Chemistry's popularity among graduate deans has also provided a strong base for the physical sciences to emerge as the most prominent field of study among graduate deans over the past century. A surprising 60 percent of the approximately 1,500 deans of record have served five years or less in the deanship. This may be attributed to the number of individuals who are appointed in an acting capacity for a limited duration. Another explanation may lie in upward mobility of graduate deans who frequently have moved to positions involving higher levels of academic responsibility. The number of appointments to the deanship has varied from year to year, but has remained at 17-19 percent from 1961 to 1975. (LBH)

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PORTRAIT OF THE GRADUATE DEANSHIP

by
John W. Ryan

Organized graduate education in the United States has achieved its first century of accomplishment. During this period of time, the graduate deanship has undergone many changes in personnel. In recent years, the selection, role, and function of the graduate dean have been reviewed by various observers;[1] however, little mention has been made of the backgrounds of those individuals who have played a significant role in guiding the intellectual efforts of the nation over the past century.

With this in mind, an examination was made of the disciplinary background and length of service in the deanship of 1,496 graduate deans. The study was limited to 240 doctoral degree granting institutions and covered the period from 1872 through 1975. All of the institutions in the study were members of record in the Council of Graduate Schools in the United States (CGS) in 1975.

Information for this study, from 1872 through 1971, was derived from earlier studies by Dr. John L. Chase of the U.S. Office of Education.[2] Data covering the years 1971-1975 were furnished directly to CGS by the institutions included in this study. It should be noted that institutions awarding exclusively professional and theological degrees were not included.

The picture which emerges from an examination of the data giving the disciplinary background of the 1,496 graduate deans who held office from 1872-1975 shows wide diversity. It is interesting to note that the most prominent academic discipline from which graduate deans have been chosen during the past century has been Chemistry (159). Rounding out the top ten disciplines in descending order, Chemistry is followed by Education (127); English

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(126); History (125); Physics (108); Biology (85); Engineering (75); Economics (70); Psychology (69); and Mathematics (63).

Chemistry's popularity among graduate deans has also provided a strong base for the Physical Sciences to emerge as the most prominent field of study among graduate deans over the past century. More physical scientists (379) have held the graduate deanship over the past 103 years than any other group; however, the Humanities and Social Sciences follow very closely. The complete distribution of major fields of study of graduate deans is provided below.

TABLE I
Major Field of Study of Graduate Deans
(Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions)
1872-1975

Area of Study[3]	Number of Graduate Deans	Percentage of Graduate Deans
Physical Sciences	379	25
Social Sciences	349	23
Humanities	291	19
Biological Sciences	273	18
Education	127	9
Engineering	75	5
Unknown	2	1
Total	1,496	100

Over the past century, a surprising number (898) of graduate deans have served five years or less in the deanship. It can be seen (Table II) that this is 60% of the approximately 1500 deans of record. Twenty-two percent (322) held the position for one year or less. Conversely, only 18 percent (266) served in this capacity for more than a decade. The median length of service of graduate deans for the entire period of this analysis is slightly less than four years.

TABLE II
Length of Service of Graduate Deans
(Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions)
1872-1975

Number of Years of Service	Number of Graduate Deans	Percentage of Graduate Deans
1	322	22
2	188	13
3	155	10
4	142	9
5	91	6
6-10	332	22
11-15	146	10
16-20	65	4
21-25	38	3
26+	17	1
Total	1,496	100

The surprisingly short tenure of many graduate deans may be attributed in part to the number of individuals who are appointed in an acting capacity for a limited duration; however, another explanation may lie in upward mobility of graduate deans who frequently have moved to positions involving higher levels of academic responsibility viz. President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Provost. Although this was not explored, it would be a fruitful area for future study. Table III presents data on the appointment of graduate deans by year.

TABLE III
Appointment of Graduate Deans by Year
(Doctoral Degree Granting Institutions)

Year	Number of Institutions	Number of Graduate Deans Appointed	Percentage of Graduate Deans Appointed
1872-1900	15	27	6
1901-1925	80	137	6
1926-1950	165	427	10
1951-1960	211	260	12
1961	232	44	19
1962	232	30	13
1963	232	32	14
1964	232	47	20
1965	232	46	20
1966	240	40	16
1967	240	39	16
1968	240	48	20
1969	240	51	21
1970	240	35	14
1971	240	49	20
1972	240	50	21
1973	240	37	16
1974	240	54	22
1975	240	43	18
Total		1,496	

The number of appointments to the deanship during the past fifteen years has varied from year to year. During the period 1971-1975, 233 individuals were appointed to the graduate deanship at doctoral degree granting colleges and universities for a 19 percent rate of appointment. This figure is slightly greater than for the preceding period 1966-1970 when 213 individuals were appointed (17%) and is rather comparable with the period 1961-1965 when the figure stood at 199 for a 17% rate of appointment.

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[3]Areas, as defined, include Physical Sciences (Chemistry, Computer Sciences, Geology, Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics), Social Sciences (Anthropology, Business, Economics, Geography, History, Political Science, and Sociology), Humanities (English and Journalism, Fine and Applied Arts, Foreign Languages, and Literature, Library Science, Philosophy, and Religion), Biological Sciences (Agriculture, Biology, Health Professions, Home Economics, Psychology, and Zoology), Education (all fields), Engineering (all fields).

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